

**Final  
Summary Minutes  
NEW MEXICO RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL  
October 28-30, 2002  
Cimarron**

**RAC Members Present:**

Crestina Trujillo Armstrong  
Larry Baker  
Kenneth Braden  
Max Cordova  
Mike Eisenfeld  
John Hand  
Cliff Larsen  
Raye Miller  
Anthony Popp  
Gretchen Sammis  
Joe Stell  
Robyn Tierney  
Don Tripp

**Designated Federal Official:**

Rich Whitley

**Chairperson:**

Kathleen Magee

**RAC Members Absent:**

William Buss  
Jerry Ryburn

**BLM Staff:**

Bob Alexander, NMSO  
James Christensen, Las Cruces FO  
Sam Desgeorges, Taos FO  
Tom Gow, Albuquerque FO  
Steve Henke, Farmington FO  
Theresa Herrera, NMSO  
Jim Hughes, Washington Office  
John Hurts  
Mike Lujan, Taos FO  
Kate Padilla, Socorro FO  
Ed Roberson, Roswell FO  
Mary Jo Rugwell, Carlsbad FO  
John Selkirk  
Jim Stovall, Las Cruces

**Facilitator:**

Toby Herzlich

**Scribe:**

Karen Meadows

**OCTOBER 28**

**NEW MEMBERS' ORIENTATION**

**Introductions (Attachment 1)**

Rich opened the meeting and welcomed new members. Kathleen introduced herself and said the RAC is a very important way for the state to have input in BLM matters. Robyn said she looks forward to a productive year addressing vital environmental issues.

RAC members introduced themselves. Raye Miller represents the oil and gas industry and hopes to adjust the negative attitude to that industry. Max Cordova is a logger from Truchas, which is strongly affected by decisions made by BLM. Don Tripp, New Mexico Legislator from Socorro, has a jewelry business and owns farms that grow alfalfa. He hopes to bring balance to the issues from all sides that come to him as a Legislator. Robyn represents the academic segment and works for the Department of Game and Fish. She hopes RAC members will be able to learn from one another. Kenneth is a rancher, responsible for 25 NNM community programs meant to benefit the economy and animal health and genetics. John is a rancher from Datil, who has worked for many years with the BLM and hopes to learn

more through the RAC. Rich thinks the RAC helps BLM with clear thinking and creativity, because 15 heads are better than one. Kathleen referred to silvery minnow and oil and gas issues, and said she appreciates the rich culture of NM. BLM staff, consultants and visitors introduced themselves.

### **Success through Collaboration**

Robyn said a shared trait of everyone in the room is willingness to learn other points of view and work together. RAC members paired to discuss past experiences working successfully with diverse groups to reach agreement.

#### Collaborative experience & principles of success

- Conversation helps. Swap places to understand the other and gain middle ground.
- Create opportunity for providing concrete, factual information.
- Gather diverse ideas.
- Crisis and common goals bring opportunity to share information, and to focus—on fire fighting, for example.
- Silvery minnow made city people aware of endangered species, when agriculture community already knew.
- Shared pain!
- Water and drought demand that New Mexicans put away differences and work together.
- It takes time to build relationships and collaborate.

#### How have relationships built on the RAC been of value?

- A jeep enthusiast and environmentalist/bicyclist toured Haystack Mountain, and the environmentalist was astonished at the care that went into that facility. Their relationship substantially affected the *Roads & Trails Guidelines*.
- Talk between RAC meetings to keep building relationships.
- Shared vision and understanding; respect and trust.
- We've tackled difficult issues. Once collaboration is reached, commitment and courage are needed to support the RAC's decision among peers.
- Make sure issues are fully fleshed out and that members are truly committed to consensual decision.
- The RAC Charter is built around a modified consensus process; but this RAC has achieved full consensus.

#### What can you contribute?

- Don: Represents various interests of NM citizens and can create balance. Listens a lot.
- Kenneth: Has definite opinions, likes people and interaction, listens well, doesn't say "yes" easily, likes common-sense solutions. Hard-liner about supporting cattle industry and grazing. Hates the broad-brush approach to the cattle industry as destructive.
- Max: Preserving rights of communities on BLM and USFS land. Brings perspective and wants to inform BLM on what works and doesn't work for communities. Makes decisions based on what's best for the land and the people who use it, not for the almighty dollar. We need to help people understand that everything is connected; we are all the owners of public land and need to protect it.
- John: As County Commissioner has had to become more flexible on issues. Flexibility and interaction are necessary. Everyone has to give a little to get something.

### **RAC IN NEW MEXICO**

## **Background, History & Purpose**

Tom Gow gave highlights decade by decade. He said BLM is still living with the legacy of posting the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act in English in communities where the primary language was Spanish. For example, in Coyote in 1998 the new USFS office building was burned down the day before its dedication. He touched on NEPA, FLPMA, ACEC, contention with the State Land Office, and continuing issues and laws that are evermore complex. Challenges of the 2000s are the aging BLM workforce, open space, litigation, urban interface, grazing, energy, fire, water and drought.

## **RAC Past & Present**

Rich drew a BLM table of organization, and elaborated on the responsibilities of FOs in Texas/New Mexico. RAC recommendations go to the State Director, Bureau Director and then directly to the Secretary of the Interior—rather than through the whole organizational chain of command. RACs in the past two years nationwide have been more effective, and better received by this administration than ever before. NM's RAC is distinguished by its connection with the Governor's Office through the Lt. Governor's representative as Chair. He urged members to come to all meetings, so a quorum can make decisions. Establishing the *Standards & Guidelines for Rangeland Health* was the first contentious and important decision NM RAC reached. The Secretary approved it with some changes, in particular the Human Dimensions section—taken directly from Section 101 of NEPA. BLM is still working on implementation of the *Guidelines*. The *Recommendations on OHVs (October 13, 2000)* is another important accomplishment of the NM RAC. The RAC has gotten better and better at coming to consensus over different issues, and its recommendations are very important to BLM. There are a lot more people on public lands than 50 years ago—calling for better planning and more enforcement.

## **Question/Answer/Comment**

- Noticed a lot of acting directors in the introductions. Agencies need to be considered businesses. Important for all that vacancies are filled ASAP.
- The regulatory process and history of implementing NEPA has been problematic. Rich is working on rewriting 101 to make it a stronger part of the process.
- The percentage of Bureau costs that comes from fees depends. Fees generate \$2-3 billion per year, and the national budget is \$1.3 billion. NM BLM generates \$325 million in revenue, and has a budget of \$52 million. Half of O&G revenue goes to the state; and energy states generate most of the income.
- The Otero Mesa discussion gave some members a view they hadn't had before. The RAC considered alternatives, and found a creative possibility that may be more acceptable to all parties.
- The Public Comment Period has an important role in bringing issues to a head and stimulating discussion.
- It is critical to make all three days of all meetings. Best to quit now if that can't be done.
- RAC meetings are often a forum for points of view to come together.

## **Charter & Process**

Kathleen said NM is approximately 50% federally controlled, so our interest in public lands is intensified. Tax and Revenue Department said BLM last year brought \$229.3 million into the NM general fund. That's precisely why this Council is important and why the Governor has a representative on the RAC. There are 2,045 NM families holding BLM permits.

The Designated Federal Official is the BLM State Director, whose role is to listen and provide information about policy and practice. The President leads meetings, organizes future agendas and meetings, and is the connection between subcommittees. The Honorary Chair represents the Governor. RAC nominees are vetted through both the BLM and the Governor's office.

FO representatives expressed the value they gain from the RAC

- Many valuable changes have been made to Roswell's public process.
- The RAC works well with local issues, making independent assessments that are helpful to FOs.
- Field trips allow one-on-one discussion on the land.
- RAC provides a gauge for statewide issues that affect individual FOs.

**OCTOBER 28                      FIELD TRIP**

Philmont Scout Ranch Director Bob Ricklefs led the RAC to sites on the Philmont property where erosion control and reseeding are underway on lands burned by last summer's fires. Crews working by hand and a contractor using heavy equipment have leveled burned trees and laid trees and branches along contour lines, to allow soil to collect rather than wash downhill.

CS Ranch's Julia Davis Stafford spoke about her family's efforts to diversify in order to protect and improve rangeland as well as remain financially stable. Changes include monitoring, running smaller hardier cattle, moving cattle more often, renting out cabins and allowing game hunts. The field trip originally included a visit to the CS Ranch, but recent rain made access roads too muddy to use.

Jim Hughes, BLM Washington Office, provided a national perspective on BLM issues.

**OCTOBER 29                      RAC MEETING**

**CALL TO ORDER, OPENING STATEMENTS & CHECK-IN FROM RAC MEMBERS**

Gretchen, Rich and Kathleen welcomed participants. Jim Hughes said Kathleen Clark sent her thanks for their contribution to the health of public lands. He announced the appointment of new state directors: K. Lynn Bennett—Idaho, Marty Yott—Montana, Bob Bennett—Wyoming, and Ron Winkler—Colorado. Linda Rondell, currently Alaska State Director on detail in Washington, will be New Mexico's new State Director. All will be on board by January.

RAC members, BLM staff, consultants and visitors introduced themselves.

Reflections on Orientation Day

- Insight that CS ranch is not fencing riparian areas
- Awareness that fire restoration is intensive
- Thinning, fire prevention, and watershed issues come to mind
- Good opportunity to learn about potential contributions of new members
- Recommend a full-day orientation as in past, broken into segments. Return the Jeopardy Game!
- Get NEPA/ESA on agenda

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA (Attachment 2)**

The agenda was approved with the following changes:

- John Selkirk replaced Bob Lee.

- During Open Discussion Session, discuss community development and grassroots workshops BLM may convene; and subcommittees—new members, new Chairs, new subcommittees.
- If public comment period is shorter than usual, can tour Philmont Villa.
- The Cerros de Taos presentation will be collaborative.
- Energy Subcommittee planned to meet after the first day's general meeting at the St. James Hotel.

### **APPROVAL OF RAC MINUTES FROM FARMINGTON AUGUST 7-9, 2002 (Attachment 3)**

The minutes for August 7-9, 2002, were approved with the following correction. During opening statements and check-in, Kathleen gave certificates of appreciation only to retiring RAC members.

#### **Motion**

Tony moved to approve the minutes of August 7-9, 2002, as corrected. Crestina seconded. Since there was no quorum, the motion was tentatively approved.

### **RANGE & WATERSHED NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE FUNDING**

Charlie Walker, Colfax Soil & Water Conservation District, said the SWCD is local sponsor and funder for the Ponil watershed rehabilitation, with a 3-pronged approach:

1. Aerial seeding of burned areas, postponed due to funding delays, but some seeding will occur during the dormant season.
2. The town of Springer is concerned about silt and ash pollution, so the SWCD took the water that clogged their canal.
3. Philmont contour tree felling.

Estimated cost of the three projects is more than \$600,000, with 75% to be funded through NRCS. All involved will still provide technical assistance under ongoing programs. The seed is gained from commercial ventures. They are seeding an annual and a couple of natives. A new crop will be available when they're ready. Both prices and availability are affected by drought. Rich said BLM and other organizations are working with ranchers in Mora on a native seed project. Some of the seed washes away; freezes may break up crust. Best success is to seed immediately after fires before the ground seals over. Estimated seed cost was \$15/acre.

#### **Question/Answer/Comment**

- USFS and private owners do their own thing. USFS lands were seeded six weeks after the fire. Vermejo Ranch did not seed.
- The results will be measured.

Ken Leiting (Attachment 4) said NRCS is the former Soil Conservation Service, with authority and responsibility expanded by Congress—including air quality. NRCS is an agency within USDA working with private landowners through 47 NM Soil Conservation Districts, with 36 field offices. Staff assists with private, tribal and state lands on a voluntary basis. The EWP Program addressed the Ponil, Cerro Grande, Penasco, and Hondo fires, working jointly with USFS and other agencies to pay for collaborative projects. EWP provided 75% of cost for protecting and rehabilitation of downstream areas. In-kind contribution is possible, and they are working through counties and Soil Conservation Districts, then reaching private landowners.

The 2002 Farm Bill passed in May with a wide range of provisions. Ken works with Title II of that bill—Conservation Provisions. An overall portfolio of services is available. He emphasized locally-led conservation. Some programs remain from the former Farm Bill, including conservation reserve, environmental quality incentives, wildlife habitat incentives, farmland protection and wetland reserve. New programs include conservation security, grassland reserve, small watershed rehabilitation and forestland enhancement. The EQIP program is primarily used in NM, and for 2002 gave NM \$10.4 million. Ground water funds of \$1.1 million came to NM. The Wildlife Habitat Incentives program received \$122,000. His handout included fact sheets, offices and websites.

### **Question/Answer/Comment**

- Reiterated that it is important to distribute seed ASAP after fires, but response time varies among agencies and owners. A collaborative team assesses need and potential response. Difficult for NRCS and USFS to have funds available at the same time. NRCS process is to approach Congress for support funds.
- Funds ran out in August; additional funds to be received in September and applied to Ponil fire.
- Cannot contract until dollars are in hand. Try to have everything ready for moving ahead. There are disappointments, but primarily in the timing—funding almost always arrives.
- Programs are competitive, e.g., EQIP received \$11 billion and had requests for more than \$40 billion. Funding was available for Penasco aerial seeding, but not for Ponil. For Cerro Grande, collaboration included NRCS funding of \$750,000 for seed.
- The EWP takes place after natural disasters. Other programs are available anytime. In Mora, e.g., funds were provided to thin forested areas. But, primarily the recipient must be an agricultural producer, not a simple homeowner.
- Funds come from different sources, so spending on a disaster does not preclude prevention.
- Certain funds are set for use on private lands only, if we can show that practices on private lands would positively affect federal lands.
- Any funding that could restore public rangelands? Generally no, but many landowners have a combination of private, state, federal lands and need one plan rather than several. Coordinated effort benefits all.

Bob Ricklefs, Philmont Scout Ranch, said the recommended density for seeding was 40-60 seeds/square foot, so he chose 50. He showed maps of 8,000 acres that were seeded. When funding is available from SWCD, work has to be done within six months. Seeding and tree felling was Philmont's cost—25% dollars out of pocket, plus management, and three weeks in February when Philmont alumni volunteers will work. He applied to the Environment Department for watershed funding. Two streams listed high quality cold water fisheries are now impaired, so were eligible for an Environmental Protection matching grant, where scout labor this summer will be the match. The NM Department of Game & Fish has a landowner incentive program that they've applied for. South Ponil Creek is an enhanced Rio Grande cutthroat trout area.

### **Question/Answer/Comment**

- How is it determined that a stream is impaired? Hearings, parameters for what a stream should be.
- Writing a proposal now to monitor 25 sites in burn areas. Robyn invited him to join a lunchtime session on a simple erosion measure
- Durango sprayed a microbe mixture on its burn. Hydromulch? Many possibilities, but all depend on rain.

### Reflection on how this is helpful to BLM

- Enhancing seeding with hydromulch might be useful. Could there be O&G reclamation use?
- May be an opportunity to observe difference between Philmont seeded areas and surrounding not-seeded so seeders can cry for more funds without waiting for supplemental funding.
- Be selective about grass species chosen, although they may be more expensive. In one area, fire fighters bulldozed a fire line and lifted turf to blade it but didn't return the turf, so erosion occurred.

### **WHAT IS THE FIRE PROGRAM DOING TO PROACTIVELY IMPROVE PUBLIC LAND FIRE PREVENTION & WATERSHED CONDITIONS?**

John Selkirk (Attachment 5) enumerated the scope of the emerging BLM fire rehabilitation, fuels and fire prevention programs.

BLM assembles a team as a fire is going, and makes plans. The State Director can spend up to \$100,000/year for stabilization projects throughout the state per year, with quick turnaround. More than that amount has to be applied for and comes from a national pool. Funds may buy water bars, rehabilitate bulldozed firelines, etc. Funds amounting to \$200,000 were provided to develop and build a seed program, including sources of native seed, particularly through local growers. Generally fire is beneficial to BLM lands, especially to grasslands; and large-scale fires are more beneficial than small ones. Mitigation may be as simple as installing an electric fence for the grazing season.

The Fuels Management/Prescribed Burn Program has grown to \$8.6 million for BLM NM, through implementation of the National Fire Plan—but is leveling out. Number of acres treated is not commensurate with increase in funding—now 70,000 acres/year is treated mechanically, chemically and with prescribed burns, adding up to approximately 80 projects. We need to look at ways to treat more acres with the funding we have, including local funding. BLM is under mandate to make comprehensive plans including all entities involved. Fire prevention is blossoming, including educating the public on what we're doing and why. There are new hires. He distributed bookmarks with an informational website—[www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)—for making homes and landscaping safer.

### **Question/Answer/Comment**

- This is a separate pool, offspring of fire suppression funding. Need a sound sensible plan for national appeal.
- Plan to burn everything on a rotational basis? No, need priorities to approach so many acres. Computer models are assessing the management system, based on risk factors.
- Can prescribed burns be used to expand small fires and extend growth for grazing areas? Only in areas set aside for prescribed burns. Usually wildfires are suppressed.
- National Fire Plan cooperates with the Governors' Association and national agencies. BLM is working from national down to local to make collaboration realistic and useful. There is attention to these issues at high levels. Rehabilitation is being streamlined. All adds up to improvements.
- Writing a fire management plan is a two-year cycle that falls in line with funding, and looks several years ahead. The National Fire Plan has been akin to winning the lottery—we're still struggling to comprehend the scope and deal well with what we won.
- Only very hot fires during very dry times are beneficial, but no one wants to burn then. This year during the drought, when range and recreation lands were all closed, BLM backed off from prescribed burns—because political and public opinion is “Why are you burning when the whole place is a tinderbox?”

- There is not a plan to let wildfires burn, so suppression is expected. Levels of suppression may allow a certain amount of “beneficial” burning. A statewide or district plan could be made that allows some to be left burning.
- Detailed activity planning can be done for specific areas, but we don’t have resources to do that broadly.
- Staff was added with part of the \$8.6 million—seven in the statewide program fire with two open positions.
- Roswell has a fire management officer and fire teams, but there’s attrition of capability when too much time and too many resources go into fire planning and prevention—so we have to focus on the smaller scale and cooperate with other agencies.
- The process seems secretive. How about public and permittee input? RMPs provide the source for input and are often years out of date. A two-year process is underway to amend all NM RMPs, including fire management plans. There is time now to engage the public and communities in both planning and economic development.
- Of 70,000 acres, 20% is treated chemically, 5-10% percent mechanically, the rest by prescribed burn.
- Air quality standards limit burns primarily because all agencies want to burn at the same time—during the best conditions—which may be only a few days in a year. There’s no yearly limit.
- BLM works with permittees to defer grazing in areas of prescribed burn, but sometimes they can’t afford to do that.
- President Bush is very interested in fuels treatment, and even visited OR to demand that forests be cleaned out. His interest is affecting all BLM lands.
- Any attention on the beetles attacking pinon/juniper forests? No broad way to approach that.

## **BLM STRATEGY FOR ENSURING PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT IS CONSISTENT WITH CURRENT SCIENCE & PUBLIC LAND HEALTH STANDARDS**

### **New Mexico Strategy 2002**

Bob Alexander (Attachment 6) said Old Rangeland Science was based on the turn of the 20th century Succession-Retrogression Model—you start from climax, and disturbance factors can be mitigated if you stop—so land goes back to the way it was. It was value driven from the grazing perspective. Southwest experience shows this isn’t workable. Defining climax is difficult, systems are complex, changes are not linear, succession/retrogression may not occur. Some changes are permanent. The BLM allotment approach didn’t take into account the full complexity.

New Rangeland Science works with complexity, thresholds, transitions, is not value oriented, incorporates new information, and addresses the reality that soils differ in productive capability.

A threshold is a point of no return, so thresholds need to be described and looked for. We’re studying plant communities to understand drivers pushing transitions into a threshold. Originally BLM management was measured against past landscape. Now we seek to understand what’s realistic and what the potential is.

ARS, NRCS, BLM and others have completed ecological site descriptions, including climate, soils and potential, of 6,677,000 acres in southern NM. The descriptions conclude, “If overgrazed, you can expect.... If OHVs used, you can expect.... If you burn....” etc.

An April workshop brought all NM FOs together to launch the Public Land Health Standards. The Human Dimensions/Local Community Standard was not adopted. Progress on whether or not they meet the standards has been reported from Carlsbad, Roswell, Socorro and Las Cruces.



Short-term monitoring considers issues like where moisture came from, what forage was produced, and whether it favored elk or livestock. Long-term monitoring states resource condition objectives, so FOs can be more realistic in response to conditions, and make changes for both short and long term. BLM staff and contractors, rangeland users and whoever else wishes to will become involved in monitoring. VMAP out of Roswell is a database of monitoring information to be used for future comparison. There are several Consultation/Communication/Cooperation/to Achieve Conservation (CCCC) NM pilots underway. Outcome-oriented management allows more flexibility to gain user input.

### **Question/Answer/Comment**

- The main difference between the old and new techniques is that we used to expect that we could return to climax. But, for example, once you lock land up with brush, it won't go back to grass. The old ways had many similarities to the new, but didn't explain the Southwest well enough.
- The new science more adequately describes situations where a system leaps into a new state. Those leaps can be unpredictable, so new science attempts to explain them. For example, in the decline of P/J forests, we know they use soil very differently, so we may be experiencing a shift to a largely juniper system. Death of pinon may be one of the leaps. Mesquite at a certain level of density will take over. New science looks at that.
- The role of disturbance is looked at differently. What will fire or a good rainy year do?
- Brush control is an issue. Once it's in, that area is past the threshold. So just killing brush won't bring back grass. We may need to control brush where it's starting to come in, not where it's well-established. NMSU is using tetrathyruron with creosote and researching results.
- Jornada Research Center is getting ecological site descriptions. NRCS is pulling old descriptions and Jornada describes the state of transition. NM is ahead of any other state in these models, allowing us to look at what our expectations should be. Past woodlands information was not as good, so BLM and USFS are working together. Las Cruces and the Rio Grande Valley are complete, now moving to the Carlsbad/Roswell Chihuahuan Desert.
- Concern about BLM taking on monitoring that doesn't impact grazing. In past different entities had separate monitoring systems, and BLM's system was tied to grazing. Once a site was described, Jornada looked at determining the direction the land was headed. They spent three years creating an approach, immune from grazing, just looking at what the land is doing, with a number of new techniques. For example, shrubs suck the nutrients from surrounding grasses, which then get farther apart. Jornada looks at grass spacing—potential for wind and water erosion. So it isn't how much bare ground there is, but how big the spaces are between grasses. They also look at infiltration and “glue” or organic matter that resists erosion.
- This doesn't apply to what we face. We have always had measurement ability. We're suffering from not getting things done. Don't take grazing out of the calculation.
- It's brush that's been out of the picture and we want to address that. We're building.

### **RAC Reflection**

- We already have implications and plans, let's get on with it.
- We have the ability to read trends and conditions. Take action rather than reinvent. Use burns and chemical control. We're trying so hard to be good managers that we're getting nothing done.
- After 50 years on the same land, with at least four kinds of monitoring, no apparent results. Burning works. Do it.
- BLM did burn 30,000 acres and met almost all its burning targets—one of the best in the Bureau.

- We yearn to make tomorrow like yesterday; and that can never be done.
- The secret is to accommodate all the different users while keeping the land in appropriate condition. Good forests are worked. We've tried everything talked about here today; let's not reinvent the wheel.

A *People* magazine article about Tweetie Blancett, a rancher who spoke during the Farmington Public Comment Period, was distributed. Cliff showed an article in that day's *Albuquerque Journal* about Phelps Dodge environmental violations—a project he's working on.

## **BLM MCGREGOR RANGE GRAZING PROGRAM**

James Christensen said there are numerous interests involved with McGregor Range, and have been conflicts. George Bush Sr. promised this area as a bombing range to the Germans. Public law 10665 now guides McGregor Range resources. BLM is writing an EIS. The former RMP and the 1990 MOU are good. The range is 680,000 acres, with 14 grazing units varying from 13-50 sections each, totaling 423 sections. The units are a buffer zone for land used to train US and German desert rangers catching and firing missiles. Roads are closed and people evacuated during missile firings, at the most 1-2x/week August through December. The Centennial Bombing Range is about 8 sections but a proposed buffer section of 125 sections would have been extremely problematic. Compromises were made: no bombing on weekends, funding to redo pipelines.

This is strong winter grazing country for cattle. Otero Mesa is a part of it. There's a variety of plant species, with good mule deer habitat, oryx, wild sheep, bear, lion, turkey, elk, fox, prairie dogs, coyote, and more. Public uses include hunting—for antelope, mule deer, quail and dove—camping, horseback riding. BLM suppresses lightning strike fires. There is urban interface so Tebuthiuron has been used in thick Ponderosa country for fire prevention.

Range improvement and maintenance covers 15 sets of trails, 300 miles of fence, 150 miles of pipeline, and three windmills. BLM has 52 water storage units ranging from 3,000-100,000 gallons. They're replacing wood fences with pipe, and have 120 troughs and 50 dirt tanks. James travels 300 miles to check water, and thinks there are 650 miles of roads on Otero Mesa.

### **Grazing program:**

- Last year there were only 550 head on the whole area, at most 2,500 head in the past five years due to drought.
- From 750 gallons/min, wells dropped to 54 gallons/min a few weeks ago, and are now at 10.
- Grazing agreements are 9-, 18- or 36-months. All seem necessary, and a 5-year lease might be a good addition. Average has been 13+ months.
- Ranchers supply salt and minerals.
- Monitoring is done. The land is stocked at about 30% capacity.
- Bid process—mail out notices in June, bids mailed back. In August sealed bids are sent. Tour at the end of August. In September, auction to highest bidder.
- Revenue: high of nearly \$350,000 in 1998, in 2001 less than \$100,000.
- Operational costs total \$230,000-\$250,000/year + \$30,000 in contracts for what staff can't do. Costs include labor, vehicles, supplies, and equipment. Moratorium on grazing has had a major effect.

This is the only situation of its kind with this scope. Authority came from the US Army for BLM to step in. Montana may have a couple of small military areas.

### **Question/Answer/Comment**

- The area considered at past meetings for O&G drilling is part of the greater Otero Mesa.
- BLM would like to fence some pastures for better utilization and more cattle, but the Army won't allow that. Rare to find a herder.
- Who benefits economically? A rancher can keep a herd here until his own range improves and take them home instead of having to sell them off. Use the land or lose it. It looks like good grassland management. It keeps the BLM in check—shows how much it costs to keep the infrastructure going. They give tours to groups like Sierra Club and Audubon Society.
- This is not a grass bank. What's unique about McGregor is that the law says it's sold to the highest bidder and the \$ returned to its management. So there is no option for making it a grass reserve. This presentation was partly meant to indicate what it would cost to provide a grass reserve.
- Most grazing permittees come from within 200 miles but in the past they came from as far away as FL. The rates are very low.
- Wildlife benefits tremendously from this maintenance. It is a world class area for certain animal species.
- If more cattle could be run after drought, BLM could cover expenses at a cost of \$8-\$9 each for up to 3,500 cattle.
- If you say BLM will manage a grass reserve and rancher's prices are down to \$1.34, it won't work. The Valle Caldera is running into that—the rate per head to run the low numbers wanted and provide education would be \$35. All interests need to understand what's involved. An educational process is needed.
- Management takes long hours and tremendous commitment, so the employees needed are not average government workers.

### **BLM'S POLICY & REGULATIONS ON GRASS RESERVES**

Jim Hughes has been involved with McGregor Range for many years and warned, "Don't mess with McGregor or you will lose it!" This is a military-run situation.

The BLM budget for the next few years will be flat. Increases would be a miracle. We have to be realistic and figure out how to do things better. We have new policies on wind generation, leasing and mountain biking. Current efforts include 42 tasks under the President's energy policy.

BLM is going to the Federal Register with new recommendations on grazing (requiring environmental NEPA work in a 12-24 month process) that concern:

1. Bremmer regulations
2. Conservation section
3. Revisiting existing grazing regulations

A review of existing regulations will address:

- Water rights
- Range improvement
- Double jeopardy

We do not want our rules or regulations to stand in the way of innovative ideas, or put anyone off the ranch. Example: The Grand Canyon Trust bought land from ranchers in the Utah Escalante with the understanding that grazing rights would be retired. However, only Congress can do that. BLM regulations currently allow three years rest, which will be extended to five years. BLM is looking at voluntary stewardship contracts, monitored but independent, and will be seeking public comment. They are also working with USDA and others to investigate forms of conservation easements, which will be out for review at the end of 2002, with an EIS later.

### **Question/Answer/Comment**

- We could use the Valle Caldera model.
- Semi-privatizing certain areas with willing participants might be a good idea.
- Funding is key to incorporating changes. Permit renewals require EAs that are costly. Is there a better way to get the same results? RMPs need to be up-to-date.
- Collaborative planning is the current approach for most agencies. Partnerships may bring a \$7-8 return for a \$1 investment.
- BLM is encouraging innovation for users and for improvement of land. RAC may be of aid in helping adjust rules and regulations.

### **RESTORING RANGELANDS IN NEW MEXICO**

Tony Benson (former RAC member) said speakers represented a coalition addressing an area west of Taos that is mixed private, state and BLM land. Its primary use is a residential subdivision in what were grazing units. The median age of permittees is 67, and no younger people are coming into the business—so many permits are being dropped; and homes are being built in new areas. Leaving these lands the way they are does not lead to an acceptable solution. In allotments not being grazed assessment has shown that conditions are worsening. How do you manage grazing amongst these other users? Discussions with residents are helping. But where will funding come from? Maps were posted for RAC members to see the areas referred to.

Courtney White said once recognizing that these lands were not in good shape, we asked “What is our goal?” and pulled up BLM protocols on rangeland health, looking at soil, grass and water. Courtney got a grant and put a crew in the field in May to assess range condition on 18,000 acres. Colors of the map showed the scale of health and deviancies. Green was healthiest. Red was least healthy. They put together a “snapshot” of rangeland health to help landowners and land managers prioritize where problems were and where work should be done. He read the final paragraph of the analysis concluding that the predominant management plan must be changed before the ecological threshold is crossed. The project took three days and cost \$18,000.

Tony said Sagebrush has taken over except in areas seeded with wheat or more recently grazed. Funding is problematic. The land in best condition is volcanic juniper forest, where three owners have seeded with grasses that grow under arid conditions, including the eight-year drought. Those ranchers have received grants to drill water wells. Water is at about 800’ but difficult to get to cattle. They don’t want to drill wells until BLM grazing permits are received. Cattle impact is the most likely way to bring money into the area for these improvements. Prescribed burns would help, because the sagebrush would die and wheat would grow.

Subdivision representative Steve said landowners are concerned about grasslands and wildlife. The subdivision rules and regulations allow no plot less than 20 acres. There are restrictions on how much space buildings can occupy. Owners cannot fence their 20 acres because this is an elk and antelope area. No chemicals are to be used on the property. No hunting is allowed. They want to restore rangeland health. He and other owners have gained experience on what works, and want to partner with the BLM and others to restore the area. Homeowners want to know more about grazing, prescribed fire and other restorative measures. Owners have solar power, catch rainwater, have gray water systems and strawbale buildings. This area is a checkerboard of varied ownership, so all need to work in concert, and receive funds that can cover the situation.

Tony recommended:

- This is a small area with about 50 allotments. Put them into use.
- Get the EAs out so we can get on with the work.
- Do the prescribed burns.
- Make EQIP moneys available. People are ready to use them.
- Be flexible on BLM grazing lease terms. Two weeks of AUM doesn't always work.
- If plots are opened as grass reserve, there needs to be incentive.

What could the RAC provide?

Address any of Tony's recommendations. Pursue legislation. Be proactive. Get public involvement in planning.

Question/Answer/Comment

- Seems like a difficult task to establish a grass bank here, but landowners (12) welcome it.
- BLM's challenge is to continue to comply with the Taylor Act while responding to changes on the land. Work with interested landowners. You can have subdivision + lifestyle + wildlife. Difficulties are being discussed among these willing partners. The land use plan could be amended. This is a balance. There are tax incentives and restoration funds.
- Consider creating an incentive system for private stewardship. For example, if I have a 100-head permit and am willing to brush hog or have prescribed fires on my allotted land, cost per head could be adjusted.
- The allotments being used were pointed out. One permittee went bankrupt, so that area needs restoration and will be available. Some permittees were in their nineties and let it go. One moved.
- Is BLM doing anything? Bob reiterated his earlier presentation: sometimes land has passed the threshold. BLM cannot afford to fix this. The permittees left. The presenters propose partnership to address a problem difficult for all. Courtney recommends considering the type of mapping he presented as a tool for addressing these problems.
- The complexion of the Western landscape is changing and we have to work together.
- Long term planning is a crux issue for BLM. Implement now for five years into the future.
- This is a tipping point.

Joe Stell and Mike Eisenberg joined the meeting

## **OPEN DISCUSSION**

### Workshops

- Robyn: These issues call for new RMPs, for the planning process and local, personal issues—in a problem-solving mode, through workshops co-hosted by BLM and RAC. Many heads are better than one. The RAC provides an enormous pool of talent. We could listen and offer suggestions at workshops, interacting with the public. For example, what Mike is doing in Farmington about the Glade.
- Perfect timing for Socorro. Growth is a primary issue. This might improve dialogue.
- This approach might work for recreation and O&G enforcement issues, noise, air quality, etc.
- A recent rock-crawling competition drew 15,000 people. A four-page amendment to the 1980s RMP guided its planning.
- Workshops are meant to bring the community into the process at the beginning rather than the end.
- Information is important for making decisions, but not if it stops progress.
- Planning needs to be a continuum. Nothing in NEPA prevents that, although some regulations may.
- The Bureau is at a tipping point. Population growth in Western communities is not being met by budgets that have never been able to manage the acres we have. We need outcome-based performance as well as community involvement. Monitoring has always been poorly funded. The mapping presented today sounds do-able. We have to manage resources differently, and the RAC can have an important role. Members have huge networks, expanding BLM outreach significantly. The Bureau's future is as an educator/facilitator.
- There isn't much financial incentive to fund monitoring assessment, but that is a way to make positive changes. Perhaps the incentive will be community ownership.
- The death of Steve Yates, who presented to the RAC recently, was announced.

## **ROADS & TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE**

At the national level, BLM decided to treat mountain bikes separately from OTVs. The distinction was between motorized and non-motorized vehicles. The NM RAC R&T Subcommittee included them together. Were we heard? Rich said policy in this state will follow the recommendations of the R&T Subcommittee, as promised by Michele Chavez. He will report at the next RAC meeting on federal developments. Offers have been made to work with BLM by various interest groups.

## **OCTOBER 29**

## **RAC MEETING**

Robyn called the meeting to order. A quorum was present. The agenda was reviewed.

## **APPROVAL OF RAC MINUTES FROM FARMINGTON AUGUST 7-9, 2002**

The motion to approve the minutes for August 7-9, 2002 was approved with the following correction. During opening statements and check-in, Kathleen gave certificates of appreciation only to retiring RAC members.

### Reflections on the previous day

- Was unaware that not grazing can cause poorer rangeland health, that over-resting land is worse than over-grazing. May not be true on tall-grass prairie, or where fire is allowed, but is true where sagebrush has taken that land to threshold. Discussion continued.
- Fort Stanton rancher Sid Goodlow used 1890s photos to restore his land in cooperation with USFS. He used fire, built dams to restore a stream, cleared trees.
- Is the Taos situation common to the rest of the state? Roswell ranchers are taking their cows off the land but keeping permits. Few have let theirs expire. More of a phenomenon in the North, where permit areas are smaller. Albuquerque is using active treatments and aggregating permit areas to improve the land.
- Exchanges? Socorro and Carlsbad are making exchanges, but the process is expensive, time-consuming, and demands adequate staff. Albuquerque completed three recent exchanges adding up to 20,000 acres. How is the public interest best served?
- The Baca Bill created the Valle Caldera and allowed BLM to sell lands identified for disposal and put money in a special account overseen by an interagency panel. BLM can purchase land to support endangered species. Process is slow; interests are diverse and ever changing. Perhaps best for landowners to work together and set priorities. BLM has 850,000 acres in NM for disposal. All land exchanges over a certain amount must have a Washington 90-day approval period. They already go through a 30-day Congressional review. Washington is contemplating a year's moratorium based on controversy in other states, particularly Nevada and Utah.
- That fund might be treated like the Social Security fund. Its use is currently specified, including limited overhead cost.
- Discussion on improvements permittees might make. No incentives. Some abandoned allotments in vicinity of Taos might be combined. Combined grazing and subdivision is problematic. The Taos subdivision represented is unusual.

### Members talked in small groups about questions the RAC would like to continue to pursue.

- Could the McGregor Range be a model for restoration? Abandoned allotments in Taos area still have permittees, so negotiation would be necessary. McGregor has supporting special legislation, is in better shape, and ranchers want to graze it.
- BLM is unable to do all that is needed. Public/private partnerships need to be part of stewardship. How do we change the BLM management scheme to do that?
- BLM has steadily improved the health of the land, particularly riparian areas in the last 100 years. We know how to leverage dollars. RAC can advise on priorities.
- The Farmington FO O&G reclamation fund stands at \$65,000 since mid-summer. They plan to have \$200,000 to address rangeland health issues for use in FY2003: 30% to special management areas, 70% for land health. RAC members, especially local ones, can help decide how funds are used.
- Need to keep people involved with the land so they will feel like stewards, reevaluate closures, provide incentive.

### Questions arising

- What do we want to see in the abandoned Taos allotments?
- How do we change the BLM management scheme?
- How can RAC work with assessment and prioritization?

- What investments do we want to make in threshold areas?
- How do BLM decisions ripple out into communities? How can that be made a community effort?
- What are incentives for permittees or locals to restore lands?

## **ENERGY SUBCOMMITTEE**

- To resolve noise issues, the Black River Duke compressor is moving to a less populated area within 45 days.
- The Las Cruces FO is holding a meeting November 6 in Ruidoso for stakeholders to comment on its RMP. Raye and other RAC members will be there.
- The Farmington RMP was discussed.
- Request to OCD for information, especially numbers on Dakota/Mesa Verde drilling.
- Renewable energy, including wind farm, biomass in Glencoe—might be good field trip destinations. Include Sid Goodlow.
- Raye was retained as Chair.

## **Question/Answer/Comment**

- The state is undertaking salt cedar eradication on the lower Pecos; and the Carlsbad FO is working on an environmental document with the state on that project. Most people seem to be in favor, although there is some opposition from Carlsbad irrigation. The project as planned does not include public land. Would be encouraging for federal agencies to join state and local efforts. Mary Jo will check and respond to Joe Stell. As much as \$1 million is coming with the new budget under noxious weeds—earmarked for salt cedar control. BLM will administer funds, coordinating with the state project. Money can be directly passed to Soil & Water Conservation Districts.
- The comment period on the Farmington RMP ending in September brought 12,000 responses, mostly philosophical opposition to O&G development. Sixty were substantive—faulty analysis, additional alternatives, etc., and are being addressed. He anticipates that analysis of public comments will be completed by end of November. Meanwhile, the FO is preparing the proposed RMP and final EIS, and a 60-day review by the Governor. In December, while the draft is in the Governor's hands, the FO could brief RAC. Problem-solving workshops might address concerns, for example, air quality, particularly ozone levels, which are being reanalyzed. Best to be proactive and build in mitigation.
- Haze is an issue in all Western states. Will the Four Corners take a hit for ambient air? The regional haze group could be engaged. Need to focus on volatile organic compounds and knocks associated with compression. State BLM staff is working with NM Air Quality Division on haze and related issues.
- What mitigating measures come into play for compressors? Proactive again, building into RMP, working closely with the state AQ Bureau. Southern UDIS used state of the art alternatives and those can be built into Farmington's final RMP. Middle ground has been reached on noise in the draft plan. Comments addressed a range of alternatives for environmental protection, especially concerning O&G, but also OHVs and coal. For example, this RMP moves from roads 95% open to OHVs, to 95% closed. Staff reached out to OHV organizations and planned with them. Need to add description of alternatives for O&G.



- Goal is 100% compliance on all new construction. High priority leases are 100% inspected, and additional funding was secured to hire a total of 14 new staff for inspection and enforcement. Three FTEs are assigned to historical reclamation surface compliance issues on old wells. The remaining staff focus on production and engineering aspects.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

The Public Comment Period was opened at 10 a.m. Robyn read a letter from Charlene Anderson and Edward Mosiman of Farmington, dated September 26. (Attachment 7) The writers were concerned that public lands in the Farmington area have been neglected and considered not worth saving. Laws have not been enforced. Fences have been cut and private lands damaged. Photographs of problem areas were included. They requested:

1. More active enforcement and substantial rules
2. Separate designated areas for vehicles, bicyclists, horsemen and wildlife, with good signage and effective fencing
3. Designated safe and quiet trails for non-motorized recreation
4. Designated shooting areas
5. Education for everyone, including law enforcement and BLM itself
6. Protection from overuse by recreation, and from industry
7. Roadless and noiseless areas set aside for wildlife.

No other members of the public were present to comment.

### **OTERO MESA LESSONS: FUTURE COLLABORATION FOR UPCOMING EISs/RMPs**

Rich recalled the presentation at a RAC meeting of a potential O&G lessee and the Wilderness Alliance—representing a broad environmental community, followed by the RAC recommendation that a mediator bring the opposing sides and other stakeholders together. A professional mediator met with parties individually and concluded that it would take quite some time to come to agreement, and that the parties were so far apart that agreement was unlikely. The mediator's report (which will be mailed to RAC members) recommended that BLM start earlier to bring stakeholders into the planning process. The mediator also suggested ways to work with the plan as already written. Those will be almost entirely implemented in the modified proposal, which was sent to Washington for concurrence. NM BLM hopes to continue from this point. Without concurrence, the original document would be acted upon, with minor language changes. Wilderness representatives consider the Otero Mesa Grasslands a very important habitat to be protected. Past RMPs left the entire area open to O&G development. Potential controversy seemed inevitable, so the RMP was amended and this process begun.

The unitization concept is similar to Eddy County's potash approach. There are some advantages for industry. Wilderness representatives wanted no development. Las Cruces FO is holding a discussion on November 6. The federal portion of the southern piece of Otero Mesa under discussion is about 100,000 acres.

APDs filed with Las Cruces FO were site specific, and individually reviewed. Two holes have been drilled. Discussion followed. Rich said this has clearly shown two key places where public comment could better be used in future: problem solving and alternatives. That would bring buy-in as well as providing valuable information for the process. All constituents have

activists. Raye said his input in past public hearings seemed to have no impact. RAC—as a well-informed public group, could comment after the scoping process. Bring communities in five years prior to RMPs, for better understanding on what information to gather.

Workshops could provide needed data and indicate gaps, but BLM cannot wait long enough to gather all data. Current data may be invalid in three years. Socorro has completed scoping—broad general ideas, with a lot of public involvement. Going back to people now would be redundant.

Rich suggested getting people involved in what data should be gathered. Then gather it, and include the public in problem-solving and developing alternatives. Invite people we know should be involved. Shorten the process while involving various parties at several stages and developing buy-in. Include informal community leaders. RAC members can have a huge impact by bringing those people to the table. Issues other than planning, like protecting the prairie chicken, would also be better addressed in that way. It is very important that the public be involved before decisions are made. Make these issues immediate for members of the public so they'll get involved.

Socorro FO looks at what other states are doing, for example showing photos at meetings and discovering what participants consider a road. Tony reminded staff that the RAC created *Roads & Trails Guidelines* that NM FOs should be using.

#### **RAC BUDGET (Attachment 8)**

Rich said total expenses for RAC meetings are \$54,000/year, with a budget of \$50,000 (out of \$52 million), so we can manage six meetings/year. Meetings run an average of \$10,000, depending on where held. This year we do not have an appropriation, and probably will not have one before February or March. BLM will receive specific instructions on how to manage the budget. Rich suggested that need drive the number of meetings, for example, plan for five and add a sixth if issues arise. RAC meetings were set for January 8-10 in Albuquerque, March 26-28, and June 4-6. The RAC national meeting by downlink will be held November 20.

Rich recommended that RAC members attend the Tucson Collaborative Land Use Planning Conference.

### **SUBCOMMITTEES**

#### Attributes of successful subcommittees

- Active chair
- Members connect between meetings
- Members are personally involved with committee issues
- Provide continuity
- Bring focus to RAC
- Assure continued action
- Forum for education on specific issues that may then be taken to full RAC
- Liaison with staff

#### **Current Subcommittees**

- **Rangeland Health Subcommittee** will be chaired by John, with Max, Crestina and Kenneth as members. Bob Alexander was recommended as BLM contact. They will consider fuel reduction.

- **Energy Subcommittee** will continue to be chaired by Raye, meeting at 6 p.m. on the first day of RAC meetings. Jay Spielman will be the BLM contact.
- **Community Engagement Subcommittee** will be chaired by Tony, with Mike, Robyn and Don as members. Rich will be the BLM contact. This subcommittee too will consider fuel reduction.
- **Ad Hoc Subcommittees**
  - Robyn and Crestina will consider RAC assistance to the **Taos** collaboration.
  - Tony will consult with members and agencies to create a **Wilderness** agenda for the upcoming Albuquerque meeting. Bill Buss and Dwayne Sykes from BLM were recommended for involvement.
- **RAC to RAC** connections will be pursued by Crestina, rather than a subcommittee.
- **Roads & Trails** will no longer be a subcommittee, but should continue to be discussed, and BLM will include feedback on the *Guidelines* at future meetings.

#### Motion

Mike moved that the RAC should weigh in on the Farmington RMP and assess alternatives.

It is important for the RAC to understand what the Farmington issues are and how well the RMP has defined what will happen in that land management area. This could be done while the RMP is being considered by the Governor. How have they decided to work with air quality data provided? Are they meeting the community's needs? Exceeding ozone standards, for example, endangers the whole state's EPA standing. Rich said this is a time-sensitive plan, partially driven by Congress. He will explore with staff how the RAC might still have effect. BLM met with EPA staff, and they are in agreement with this plan. Ozone is a concern to all, and the state is seeking more data on all sources of ozone.

Mike would like to be involved with Farmington FO staff discussions. All four adjoining states are involved in this serious issue. RAC involvement might include an ad hoc project leading to better understanding of how to become involved in the process of future RMPs. Are we an advisory Board of Directors, or micromanaging? Can we help fix the process rather than the situation? Air quality and ozone came up in Farmington public comments and will be addressed, along with noise, water, and fragmentation of wildlife habitat. Rich reiterated that he will look at how the RAC might be engaged before the Governor's review is complete. How are responses to comments given? A particular landowner's comment may be addressed specifically.

The only written FO reports received were from Las Cruces and Carlsbad. (Attachments 9 & 10) Improvement is needed. Recommended that FO Managers be asked to provide specific updates about issues. Could include a 45-minute session with FO representatives.

Kathleen said goodbye, wished the RAC the best of luck and encouraged support of the RAC model for interaction with BLM.

#### Future Agenda Topics

- Wilderness
- Return to Farmington
- Continue range restoration
- NEPA/ESA
- Domenici staff re policy perspectives around public/private land ratio

- Land exchange process
- FO discussion early day 2
- EAs
- Presentation from people like Caren Cowan of the Cattlegrower's Association, Gerald Chacon, Francisco Vigil, etc., on EAs, why nonuse, why permits not renewed, is this increasing?
- Visit Sid Goodlow (biomass)
- NEPA/FLPMA explanations

Members recognized that meeting the needs of an incoming State Director, as well as a number of new members and a new representative from the new Lt. Governor's office—should be considered as an agenda was set. Perhaps the meeting should be primarily informational.

### January Meeting

#### **1<sup>st</sup> day**

- Wilderness—What is a WSA? Make it elementary so we can be on the same page. Discuss WSAs near Albuquerque and throughout NM.
  - Cabezon viewpoints
  - Rio Puerco Watershed improvement issues and implications

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> day**

- Farmington RMP and status of problems between ranchers and O&G, ozone comments update
- Feedback from Robyn on national RAC meeting, Collaborative Land Use Planning Conference, and Taos project report
- FO reports including:
  - R&T Guidelines implementation
  - S&G implementation
  - Write-ups focusing on grazing issues: # of allotments, inactive and active acreage, total inactive (orphan allotments)
  - Snapshot of where renewals stand
- Subcommittee Reports
- Adjust agenda to meet needs of new State Director

### Field Trip

- Cabezon
- Tom & Ed will plan further
- Archaeological prehistoric (more than 900 Anasazi sites) and historic communities south of Cabezon

### Future meetings

- Rich advised that RAC input on current WSAs might be helpful, but proposing new wilderness areas is out of BLM hands.
- In March return to Farmington
- In June consider grazing and range, lengthy EAs, Glencoe biomass plant, Caren Cowan, visit Sid Goodlow ranch, Ft. Stanton

What was done well at this meeting?

- Good crash course, but still feel undereducated.
- Interesting to meet people and hear different views.
- Three days very long, hate to add work to BLM staff.
- Amount of information excellent. Still unclear about role of RAC. Only one decision made—for minutes!
- Best of the three years he's seen new group oriented—good start.
- Documents: *Rangeland Health, Roads & Trails Guidelines*, come out seldom but these differing viewpoints have agreed on them. Even if we don't decide something, our discussions influence what they do.
- Otero Mesa response was helpful.
- Information shared here returns to the RAC members' networks.
- Some issues that arise spontaneously generate discussion and recommendations. Natural for a bureaucracy to resist change, so we have to keep wearing away at it. Good to have Jim Hughes and his comment that rules and regulations should not hinder.
- Need to spend time at the elementary level so we're all on the same page.
- Dinner at Gretchen's was great—informal bonding.
- Setting excellent.
- Not contentious, varying interests/high level of respect.

What needs improvement?

- Could develop a dictionary of acronyms
- Need one-page FO reports from all, one week ahead
- No more cafeteria food
- Better directions for getting settled

Meeting adjourned.

/s/ Robyn Tierney  
RAC Chairperson